

I am writing in support of delaying the implementation of the requirements regarding reading models or programs in Connecticut.

Regardless of ethnicity, race or socioeconomic status, each and every child, every day, deserves a quality education delivered by well-prepared teachers with access to the resources they need to help meet the needs of all students.

Reading achievement has historically been a concern at all levels of our society. **As a parent of a child with an IEP, I know that there was not one program or strategy that taught my child to read. My child learned to read because of competent and devoted teachers with high expectations who used a variety of resources to meet my child's individual needs.** By mandating that school districts choose one of the five "approved" reading programs the state is creating a larger disparity and unrealistic expectations.

This state mandate is unfunded, expecting local districts to bear the burden of purchasing costly programs. In small districts, it would take close to \$1 million to implement. School districts throughout Connecticut are not equitably or equally funded, and this mandate requires districts with limited funding and resources to purchase an "approved" program, compounding the already existing disparity.

This state mandate is unrealistic because there is not one program that meets the needs of all students. As a **K-5 Literacy Specialist and Reading Interventionist** for 20 years, I understand what it takes to help students grow in their reading skills, interest, and achievement. It requires the flexibility of multiple resources, regular training, literacy coaching, literacy intervention by a knowledgeable interventionist familiar with best practices in the teaching of reading, and regular progress monitoring to help each and every student grow as a reader. This can not happen with a single strategy or program. This mandate ignores the expertise of those who have committed their lives to building the knowledge base needed to make instructional decisions that employ the appropriate resources to meet the needs of each student. Furthermore, the mandate will be undoing the monetary and human resource investment of many districts who have worked to find the right balance in a continuous model of reflection, research and refinement.

The approved reading programs are limited. Some do not even have the phonics component that is required for approval. There is a lack of culturally responsive representation and strategy instruction that promotes critical thinking. If we are not teaching our students to become critical thinkers, we are not preparing them to be responsible citizens of their ever-changing global community.

I would like to propose a suspension of this mandate. During this suspension, there should be a collaborative opportunity for Literacy Coaches, Literacy Interventionists and Special Education teachers from every district to work directly with the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success and the Reading Leadership Implementation Council in order to provide accurate accounts, information, and life experiences of the children they work closely with every day. If this is not possible across all districts, then it should include a wide selection of districts that represent all demographics from Suburban communities, Urban communities and Rural communities. The current members of the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success and the Reading Leadership Implementation Council do not represent a diverse perspective or experience of educators, literacy coaches, interventionists or special education teachers. Nor do they represent the students they claim to support.